Memoir

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Biography.

MEMOIR OF THE REV. JAMES RICHARDS, AMERICAN MISSIONARY IN CEYLON, WHO DIED AUGUST 3, 1822.

We mentioned the decease of Mr. Richards, at p. 96 of our number for March. Since that time, we have received, from the brethren at Ceylon, a Memoir, from which, as it is longer than we can consistently insert, we shall compile such notices, as will tend to illustrate the character of that devoted missionary.

Mr. Richards was born in Abington, Mass., February 23, 1784. He was the second son of James Richards, Esq. While quite young, his parents removed to Plainfield, in the same state. His early education was strictly religious; and during a season of special seriousness, under the ministry of the Rev. Moses Hallock, the pastor of that church, he became a hopeful subject of divine grace. He was then about thirteen years of age: but he did not unite himself with the visible church until six years after this time. The following paragraphs are extracted from the memoir.

"Being a young man of respectable talents and ardent piety, he was early desirous of obtaining a liberal education, that he might be prepared to preach the Gospel of reconciliation. But his father, having a family of seven children, did not feel himself able to dispense with the services of James, who was then his eldest son, (an elder brother having died in infancy,) and to give him a public education. In these circumstances, his desires to devote his time to the studies preparatory to a collegiate education, could not be gratified, till he was nearly twenty years of age. At the age of twenty-two, he became a member of Williams College. During the whole course of his education, such were his pecuniary circumstances, that he was under the necessity of submitting to many privations. These reflect honor upon his Christian character, as he submitted to them, from a strong desire to promote the best interests of his fellow men.

"While a member of college, his classical acquirements were respectable, and, in the mathematics, he excelled. But it is less on account of his attainments in literary and scientific knowledge, that he is deserving of esteem, than for his love of order, his correct deportment, and the bright example, which he set before his fellow students. During his residence in college, a revival of religion took place. He labored among the students, with diligence, prudence and zeal, and became the instrument of good to many of them. It was in college, that he became acquainted with the beloved and lamented Samuel J. Mills, who was his classmate. A very intimate and endeared friendship was early formed between these kindred spirits; a friendship, which continued through life, and which, it is believed, has been resumed, and is to be perpetuated, in heaven.

"It is already known to many, that Mr. Richards was among the first in his native land, who sacredly devoted themselves to the cause of missions among the heathen. This he did at a time when the subject of foreign missions had excited little attention in America; and before any, except that little band of brethren, (of whom he was one,) mentioned in the life of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, had thought of making it a *personal* concern. It was here, that they examined the subject together. It was here that they so often retired from the sight of the world to some consecrated spot for fasting and prayer, that they might seek divine direction, and find a door of entrance among the heathen. From that time, he steadily

pursued his object, amidst many delays and discouragements, which would have diverted any less devoted mind from its object.

"In 1809, he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and the same year became a member of the Theological Seminary at Andover. Here he labored with diligence and success in concert with Mills, and several others of his brethren, in promoting a spirit of missions among the students in the Seminary; and, also, in the Christian public, by the distribution of many books and pamphlets on the subject of missions.

"In June 1810, Mr. Richards was one of that little company, five in number, who presented to the General Association of ministers in Massachusetts, the Memorial on the subject of missions, that led to the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. As Mr. Richards's name, however, does not appear in the Minutes of the General Association, it may be proper to state the reason of its omission. The subject of foreign missions being comparatively new, at that time, in America, it was thought by the members of the Association, that *four* was a sufficient number to be presented, in the first instance, before the Christian public, as devoted to that cause. Mr. Richards's name was, therefore, erased, because the others, with the exception of Mills, were his seniors in the Theological Seminary, and would be sooner prepared to leave their country on a foreign mission. But although their junior in his collegiate standing, he was second only to Mills in having solemnly devoted himself to this great and glorious object. His heart was much set upon it. As a proof of this, it may be proper to mention, that, for several years after he had formed the resolution of becoming a missionary to the heathen, he had no other prospect of accomplishing his object, than that of working his passage to some part of the gentile world, and of casting his lot among the heathen. This he fully intended to do, in case there was no other mode of accomplishing his object.

"As an evidence of his strong attachment to this cause, the following brief extracts are selected from his journals.—'I feel that I owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. The heathen have souls as precious as my own. If Jesus was willing to leave the bosom of his Father, and expose himself to such suffering here below, for the sake of them and me, with what cheerfulness should I quit the pleasures of refined society, and forsake father and mother, brothers and sisters, to carry the news of his love to far distant lands; let me never consider any thing too great to suffer, or any thing too dear to part with, when the glory of God and the salvation of men require it.' Again: 'I hope to use my feeble efforts in disseminating the word of eternal life in the benighted regions of the east. But I feel a deep conviction of my own weakness and dependence on God, and the importance of being qualified for this great work. May the Lord give me strength and grace! I feel as though I should be greatly disappointed, if I should not be permitted to preach Chr[illegible] to the poor pagans.' At another time he writes; 'There is some prospect, that peace may soon be restored to our country, and I hope ere long to join my missionary brethren in the east. My heart leaps with joy at the thought. I long to preach Christ to the heathen. But the burden of my prayer of late has been, that I may be prepared to act the part assigned me.'"

In September 1812, Mr. Richards finished his theological studies at Andover, and became a preacher of the Gospel. In November following, under the direction of the American Board of Missions, he entered the Medical School at Philadelphia, where, for nearly two years, he prosecuted his studies with commendable diligence and good success. While in that city, he had many opportunities of preaching to destitute congregations, and in parts of the city where the stated means of grace were not enjoyed; and, in conjunction with the lamented Warren, was afterwards employed, for a considerable time, as a missionary in the suburbs of the city. He took the degree of Master of Arts, in 1814; and spent a considerable part of the next year in preaching to a people, who, previously to his going among them, had been much divided; but, in consequence of the blessing of God on his labors, were united again, and enjoyed a pleasing revival of religion. They then urged him to remain and become their pastor; but his previous engagements rendered it improper, in his view, to comply with their request.

"In May, 1815," says his biographer, "he was married to Miss Sarah Bardwell, of Goshen, Ms. and on the 21st of June following, was ordained at Newburyport, in company with Messrs. Mills, Warren, Meigs, Poor and Bardwell, and expected soon to sail for Ceylon. About this time, he made the following entry in his journal, expressive of his attachment to the missionary work. 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies; especially for affording me a near prospect of commencing the work, on which my heart has been so long and so constantly set! For more than seven years, I have had one uniform desire of spending my life among the heathen. If I know my own heart, I do wish to spend and be spent in preaching the glorious Gos-

pel of Christ.' Though he expected to sail in a few weeks after his ordination, several circumstances occurred to prevent the sailing of the vessel until the 23d of October. At that time, in company with eight missionary brethren and sisters, he embarked in the Dryad for Ceylon. When asked, afterwards, how he could refrain from weeping at the time of leaving his native country, and all that was dear to him there; replied, 'Why should I have wept? I had been waiting with anxiety almost eight years for an opportunity to go and preach Christ among the heathen. I had often wept at the long delay. But the day on which I bade farewell to my native land was the happiest day of my life.'

"The Dryad had a favorable voyage of five months to Colombo. Mr. R. a short time after his arrival, was attacked with an inflammation of the eyes. Not being sufficiently aware of the debilitating influence of a tropical climate, he, in order to remove the inflammation, probably reduced his system too low. This, in connexion with much fatigue, in removing from Colombo to Jaffna, doubtless laid the foundation of those pulmonary complaints, which finally terminated in death. He arrived in Jaffnapatam about one year after leaving America, and in a few months removed to Batticotta, where he was associated with Mr. Meigs. Here, although his health was feeble, he labored with diligence in superintending the repairs of the buildings at that station, and in preaching to the natives through an interpreter. But in September 1817, he was obliged to desist from preaching and from study, in consequence of a cough and weakness of the lungs. A visit to Colombo, having been obviously very beneficial to his health, it was thought expedient for him to repeat the visit, and eventually to accompany Mr. Warren, then at Colombo, to the Cape of Good Hope. In April 1818, the two brethren set sail from Colombo, and in July, they arrived at Capetown. There the beloved Warren took his departure for a better world, and left his friend and brother to pursue his earthly pilgrimage alone. They had, for a long time, been united in the closest bonds of Christian friendship. From the state of Mr. Richards's health at this time, it was thought that the period of their separation could not be long. He remained at the Cape about four months. During the first three months of this period, his health and strength were much improved, and he entertained raised expectations of final recovery. But during the last month, his symptoms took an unfavorable turn. He raised considerable blood from his lungs. His cough, also, became much worse; his strength failed very fast, and he entirely lost his voice. During the greatest part of these four months, he lived in the family of John Melville, Esq. the kind friend of missionaries, and of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, where he was pleasantly situated, and received every attention, which it was in the power of the family to bestow."

During his residence at the Cape, he sent several long letters to his wife kept in the form of a journal. From these many interesting extracts might be made, were there room for their insertion in this account. The following, however, will give some idea of the state of his mind during that period.

"August 15th 1818. The day that Br. Warren died, Mr John Melville, in a very cordial manner invited me to take up my abode with him, and on Thursday I removed to his house. He is an English gentleman, pious, sociable, agreeable, about my age, and has a pleasant serious wife and two children. I am now very pleasantly situated. May the Lord reward him for all his kindness to me!

August 20th. Last evening Mr. and Mrs. Shaw of the Wesleyan mission

with a few others came here to spend the evening in singing and prayer. My feelings were very much excited the latter part of the evening by the sweet singing of two Hottentot girls who came with Mr. S. from his station at Ramisberg about 400 miles distant from the Cape. They give evidence of true piety. They sung very correctly and with great animation. Mr. Melville asked one of them if she thought Christ died for her? She said "Yes." He asked why she thought so? "Because he died for all sinners."

Augt. 28th. I must inform you my Dear S. though it should start the tear, that I am still more unwell today than yesterday. This morning I raised in a short time about a teaspoonful of blood. But do not be cast down at this; and not

only so, but why should we be cast down when death comes as a messenger, to call us or our friends away from this sinful troublesome world to the enjoyment of God in heaven? Come then, let us cast our burdens on the Lord, look to him for support and go on our way rejoicing."

"Monday Sept. 1st. It is now about 4 o'clock here and in Jaffna. I suppose the brethren and sisters at Tillipally and Batticotta may be praying for Br. Warren and myself at this time. Br. Warren is far beyond the reach of our most fervent petitions. "May the Lord sanctify his death to us all; make us more humble and zealous; and prepare us to die as he evidently died in the triumph of faith."

"Sabbath. Sept 6th I hope you

have seen many natives collected at our house today to hear the Word of God, and that your heart has been drawn out in prayer to God for their salvation."

After relating a very pleasing anecdote expressive of a strong desire to behold the glories of Christ in heaven, he remarks, "Well my Dear, how is it with us? Do we pray and long and wait for a sight of the unveiled glories of our God and Savior? Why do we wish to go to heaven? Have we had a glympse of the character of Christ, and are we enraptured with her beauty? O then, what will it be to see him face to face! May this be our glorious privilege!"

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear"

"Sept. 9th. You can scarcely imagine

how many circumstances bring your image before me. If I sit musing in my room my mind flies to Batticotta. If I pray, my family comes in for a share. If I read the Bible, I often meet with something concerning the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children. If I go to the parlor to see company, they often inquire about my family. When I take my food I see a husband with his wife, and parents with their children. But after all, I am cheerful and happy for which I desire to be thankful. I am happy in the full conviction that the Lord doeth all things well. I am happy in the glorious hope that each of us has a better portion than husband or wife."

Sept. 21st I took a ride today on horseback and when I came near the race

ground I saw a number of beautiful tents pitched, and found that the annual races had commenced. This amusement excites great attention here. O that the glorious <u>christian</u> race did but excite as much attention as these despicable <u>horse</u> races! In these races, if one gains, the other must lose. Not so in the race set before us. O my Dear, let us so run that we may obtain!

At this time, in answer to inquiries respecting his views and feelings in prospect of his departure, observed, "there is nothing gloomy in the prospect of death. I have not those transporting views of the Savior which I desire. Yesterday I was more favored in this respect than usual." Several hymns were then read to him, which he heard with much delight. He observed "yesterday I took into particular consideration the state of my heart, that I might know the foundation of my hopes. I could not doubt but I should obtain mercy through the merits of Christ."

During the two following months his disease continued evidently to make progress. He was however able to walk from one room to another, and to ride out in a palanquin almost every day. At

this period, though his bodily sufferings were not great, he was much of the time afflicted with a sensation of numbness and dizziness in his head which had an unfavorable influence upon his mind and prevented him, in some degree, from attending to his devotional exercises.

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"Sept. 30th. I have just heard a gentleman of rank and fortune, living within a few miles of this, died very suddenly last evening at the card table. Who would wish to go from the card table to the bar of God? O! let us never be engaged in anything that will unfit us in the least degree to stand before God in Judgment!"

"Monday evening October 5th. We have had our monthly prayer meeting, and to me it was a pleasant season, though only five of us were collected. What would become of the world if God was as backward in showing mercy as we are in asking for it? What would become of Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans if there was no more feeling for them in heaven than there is on earth? What would become of us

if God was as unfaithful to his promises as we are to ours? Blessed be God, his promises can never fail!

October 7th. Speaking of the state of his health he says, "what if I am a little worse today; or what if I should continue to grow worse and never recover?" What are we that our lives should be of such great consequence? In a few years it will scarcely be known that such a person as James Richards ever lived. We can never get too low an idea of ourselves. Compared with the Creator, we are nothing, yea less than nothing. Compared with the rest of our own species, our place can scarcely be found; so that in reality we are of very little consequence. Let us not then be so much concerned about ourselves; but let us be more concerned for others, and for the glory of God."

"Saturday evening October 10th. With the return of holy time, many tender thoughts come to my mind. I think of my dearest friend on earth, as having offered up her evening devotions, not forgetting the one who now addresses her. I think of my friends in the West as busily engaged in finishing the labours of the week. I think of a multitude of God's children, as looking forward with delight to the duties of the sanctuary. I think of the glorious work when our blessed Savior triumphed over death and hell. I think of that awful, that unspeakably glorious day, when the last trump shall sound the dead awake and stand before God in judgment. In view of <u>such</u> events, how do the joys or sorrows of an individual dwindle into insignificance!"

"October 23rd. I have just heard

of the arrival of two missionaries here, on their way to Calcutta. I have been thinking that if other missionaries will go out and do the work, I am willing to be released from it. How much better to be in heaven than on earth! How much better to be singing praises for deliverance, than to be still held in bondage! How much better to be holy than sinful! How much better to love and serve God with all our heart, than to do it but very imperfectly! What christian does not wish to have his faith changed into vision, and his hope into fruition!

"October 27th. It is now more than six months since I was separated from you and from our only child. In regard to my outward circumstances during this period, I have indeed been unhappy. But I have found unspeakable relief in the contemplation of spirit-

ual objects. Were it not that the Lord is gracious to my soul, I should sink under my afflictions. The consideration that all things are ~~at~~ the disposal of infinite wisdom and goodness, and my strong hope of a glorious immortality, frequently raise me above all my trials, and carry my soul to that happy world where sickness and sin, and parting with friends shall never be known.

"November 7th. Well my dear S. my fever and night sweats have again returned. I hope they will not continue long. This however will be just as infinite wisdom shall direct. This is a pleasing consideration. If the cause of the Redeemer can be advanced more by my dying in Africa than in Asia, why should not my body be laid here? Christ and heaven are as near ~~to~~ Africa

as to Asia or America; and if we are the children of God, we shall wish to have his glory promoted whatever becomes of us. If my heart does not deceive me, these are my feelings."

"Nov.r 9th monday. The Rev. Mr. Thom preached yesterday from these delightful words, The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice &c. I was much delighted and longed to be in heaven where Jesus reigns in all his matchless glory. O what a glorious place is heaven! There is every thing that is beautiful and lovely. There is every thing that is desirable and glorious. There is the unveiled God manifesting his resplendent perfections in the person of his equal Son. There is that glorious character who offers pardon and happiness to the rebellious sons of Adam— who died upon the cross that sinners such as we might have

eternal life. Yes, My Dear S. if we get to heaven, we shall there find this wonderful personage in the midst of the throne, wearing a crown, not of thorns; but a crown that will show that he is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." There also we shall find the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and all the faithful followers of Jesus. Nor shall we be idle spectators. We shall be allowed to gaze, to admire and to adore. We shall be permitted to exert all the powers and faculties of our souls in love thanksgiving and praise. This is the heaven for which I long and wish and pray."

In the latter part of November he embarked for Madras in company with the Rev. Mr Traveller and his lady. From them he

received great attention and kindness which contributed much to his health and comfort on the voyage. He arrived at Madras about the middle of January. There also he found many kind friends from whom he received the most decided evidences of christian affection. From Madras he proceeded to Colombo. From the accounts that his brethren received respecting him, they had much reason to fear that he would not live to reach Jaffna. But the Lord was better to them than their fears. Although unable to travel much by land, he was conveyed by water from Colombo to Jaffnapatam in safety. It was with difficulty however that he was carried from thence to Batticotta, a distance of only seven miles. His symptoms at that time were so alarming that no one who saw

him thought he could survive one month. He considered himself to be near the eternal world. He spoke and felt like a dying man. His quiet submission, his cheerful serenity, his heavenly mindedness, his serious conversation and faithful reproofs were in a high degree consoling as well as profitable to his brethren and sisters. Soon after his return, he had all his worldly concerns settled. At his request a graveyard was prepared, and a coffin made for him. These things are mentioned to show that he viewed his speedy departure from this world as in the highest degree probable. He however survived from week to week, and from month to month, though apparently on the decline. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. His voice was gone; his fever considerable; night sweats profuse and his

cough very distressing. Some time in August however, these symptoms began to abate and almost imperceptibly he recovered a considerable degree of health and strength.

After he was sufficientty recovered to be able to write a little, he made a few notices respecting his voyage, his sickness, his return to Batticotta and his feelings at that time. On the last mentioned topic he writes as follows. "Thus through the mercy of God, after an absence of a year wanting one day, I found myself at home, surrounded not only by my own family, but also by missionary brethren and sisters. I expected soon to leave them; but it gave me pleasure to think that I should die in their arms, and in the presence of those heathen, among whom I had performed a little

labor, and to whom I had preached the gospel. I expected soon to bid farewell to my dear wife, to my missionary brethren and sisters and to that great and good work on which my heart had been constantly set for many years." He showed by all his conduct as well as conversation, that his heart was indeed set on this work. For as soon as he had recovered sufficient strength, he commenced visiting the native free schools connected with the station. He was enabled, by means of an interpreter, who accompanied him, to inspect the studies of the boys and also to communicate to them religious instruction.

Early in April 1820, he began to recover his voice so as to be able to speak loud for the first time (except for a

few days on his voyage from the Cape to Madras,) in more than seventeen months. During that month he was able to take very considerable exercise on horseback, as well as to use more stimulating food and drink. By these means, his health and strength were very visibly improved. From this time until May 1821, there was but little alteration in the state of his health. During that year, he did much for the benefit of the mission, not only by his counsels and his prayers, but by active labor as a physician both to the souls and bodies of this people. He was remarkable for his diligence in business, as well as fervency in spirit, laboring sometimes beyond his strength."

After the death of Mrs Poor,

he became considerably more unwell, partly in consequence of fatigue during her sickness; and from this time his health visibly, though not rapidly declined. But though in a feeble state of health, as the situation of the station at Tillipally after Mrs. Poor's death was such that it was thought advisable for Mr. and Mrs. Richards to remove there, he very cheerfully went; and as his strength permitted, he labored both in the school and family; and also among such natives as he had access to. He removed to Tillipally in June. So late as December, he made a few remarks in the church on the Sabbath after sermon; and on the same day went a little distance to address some people and succeeded so well as to determine on attempting to preach by an

interpreter the next Sabbath. On the Saturday previous, he caught a slight cold; but did not think it a sufficient reason to prevent his addressing the people. On the Sabbath he was nearly as well as usual, and performed the service in the church with as little difficulty as he had anticipated. On the night following some unfavorable symptoms appeared. It was indeed the commencement of a new period of his illness; and from that time he continued gradually to decline. About the middle of April 1822 there were other appearances of an alarming nature, which were the means of awakening his mind to contemplate the realities of eternity as near at hand. ~~At this I should be greatly disappointed if I should not be permitted to~~

In the latter part of November, he embarked, in company with the Rev. Mr. Traveller and his lady, for Madras, where he arrived about the middle of January. The kind attentions of his fellow passengers contributed to his comfort and health; and in Madras he found many friends. He next proceeded to Colombo; and from thence he went by water to Jaffnapatam. Though the distance from this place to Batticotta is but seven miles, yet, as he was obliged to travel it by land, he performed the journey with difficulty. For a season, he considered himself, and was considered by his brethren, as near death. But in August 1819, his symptoms were more favorable, and not long after, he recovered a considerable degree of health and strength. He then commenced visiting the native free-schools connected with the station; and was able, by means of an interpreter, to inspect the studies of the boys, and to communicate to them religious instruction.

"Early in April 1820," says the memoir, "he began to recover his voice, so as to be able to speak loud for the first time (except for a few days on his voyage from the Cape to Madras,) for more than seventeen months. During that month, he was able to take considerable exercise on horseback, as well as to use more stimulating food and drink. By these means, his health and strength were visibly improved. From this time until May 1821, there was but little alteration in the state of his health. During that year, he did much for the benefit of the mission, not only by his counsels and prayers, but by active labor as a physician, both to the souls and bodies of this people. He was remarkable for his diligence in business, as well as fervency in spirit, laboring sometimes beyond his strength."

After the death of Mrs. Poor, he became considerably more unwell, partly in consequence of fatigue during her sickness; and he never again rose to that degree of vigor, which he had enjoyed for the year previous.—But we must hasten to the closing scene, as described in the memoir.

"On the evening of the 29th of June 1822, he was attacked with severe pain in his right side, which continued several hours. From this time, the commencement of his last illness may be dated. The pain in his side returned, on the three following days, and on Monday the 1st of July, it was excessively severe, and con-

tinued nearly six hours. It was to be hoped, that, in view of his protracted illness, he would be permitted quietly to descend to the grave. But, the 'Lord seeth not as man seeth:' and, in this case, his brethren had a pleasing illustration of the truth 'that the Lord doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.' The necessity and utility of the severe sufferings, to which he was subjected, were in a good degree apparent even to us. They were evidently the means of relieving him from that state of mental imbecility, of which he had much complained, and of rousing to rigorous exertion all the powers and faculties of his soul. While thus awakened by this powerful stimulus, the Lord was pleased to manifest himself unto him in a special manner, as the God of all consolation, as an infinitely glorious Being, and the object of supreme desire. He was favored, at that time, with unusually elevated conceptions of the character of God, and with correspondent affections of heart. He afterwards repeatedly remarked, in reference to these seasons of suffering, that such were his views of the divine character, and so desirable did it appear to him, that God should be glorified by all his creatures, that he felt willing that his sufferings should be continued, and even increased, if it were necessary to promote any glorious designs of his heavenly Father; and that his sufferings were so evidently the means of rousing his mind to those sublime and heavenly contemplations, that he was in a degree reconciled to them, and disposed to regard them as a proper occasion of thanksgiving. It is evident, that these seasons of severe pain gave a character to the whole remaining course of his sickness; and that they were the means of increasing his happiness and his usefulness, during the last weeks of his life.

Soon after this attack there was a marked change in his system. For many weeks he had been unable to lie in bed during the day in consequence a bad cough and great difficulty of breathing. But now his lungs were in some degree relieved. He breathed more freely—coughed but little, and could lie in bed with ease. Though he was better in these respects, he had other symptoms which indicated the near approach of death, and there was little reason to hope that he would continue through the week. He lay in a sinking state, and could speak only in a whisper. at intervals however, he was much inclined to converse, and as the brethren and sisters in the mission spent much time with him, he took opportunity of conversing freely with almost every individual. These con-

versations were of a most interesting nature. He spoke under a deep impression that he should soon leave them and enter into the joy of his Lord. His observations were evidently dictated by an unfeigned love to all; by a deep interest in the prosperity of the mission; and by a sincere regard to the honor and glory of God. Under such an influence he spoke with great freedom and faithfulness.

The latter part of the first week in July he recovered a little, and his symptoms were more favorable. His fever abated, he had a tolerable appetite for his food and rested so well during the night that it was thought possible he might so far recover as to be able to walk. He felt confident however that he should not; yet he hoped he should

be able to wait patiently all the days of his appointed time. He observed to Mrs Richards, "I have always felt a strong love of life. I have had much enjoyment in life, and never till now knew what it was to be weary of the world. But now I long to be freed from this sickly body and wearisome world." On the evening of the 8th having passed the day in a drowsy wandering state of mind, he was favored with some lucid intervals. In the course of the night he frequently made observations, and repeated passages of Scripture which were expressive of his peace of mind and confidence in God. "He that has been with me twenty four years (the time that he had entertained a hope through grace) will not leave me now. Whom have I in heaven but thee? He

shall hide me in the grave and my rest shall be sweet." He was able to hear a little reading, and requested the brother who watched that night to pray with him. He continued to be more comfortable through the next day. In the afternoon a few of the large boys belonging to the Charity Boarding School came and stood at the door. He told them to call all the boys of the first class whom he had been in the habit of instructing. After they had assembled, he solemnly charged them to remember and regard the exhortations he had often given them; told them that the truths he had made known to them were now his support and consolation; and that if they would be happy in prospect of death and in eternity, they must quickly repent

and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

After having expressed a desire to depart soon if it was the will of God, he was asked if he should not be willing to live if God had any more work for him to perform?. "Yes, certainly" he replied, "but the appearance is that my work is done. I have had for a long time, a strong desire to do something for the heathen; and it has been my greatest outward trial that I could do so little. But God has taught me submission. If he needed me, he would have enabled me to do more. I rejoice that he gave me an opportunity at so early a period to manifest my love to the heathen; and I desire to praise him for all the peace and quietness of mind that he has bestowed upon me since I have

been deprived the privilege of laboring actively in his service."

On the evening of the 18th of July, Nicholas the native preacher at that station having prepared to go on a preaching excursion to some distant parishes, came in to see him. Mr. Richards called him to his bed side, and asked him if he remembered what Mrs. Poor said to him in her dying hours! He then repeated the substance of her remarks and said "this is also my adieu;" and added "live near to your Savior, and then you will be prepared for your duty. Be faithful unto death, and then you will receive a crown of life." He made also other short observations of a similar nature.

A few days after this he

requested that one of the native members of the church might be called in, whose conduct had been in some respects exceptionable. He warned him in few words of his danger and exhorted him to watch unto prayer and to stand fast in the faith. He occasionally conversed with several of the native members of the church, and with other natives who came to see him. He manifested a lively interest in the salvation of the heathen, and expressed much confidence in the belief, that if his missionary brethren obtained grace to persevere in their labors, God would erelong make a signal display of his power and love among this people.

"On the 19th of July, his symptoms became more alarming, and his distress from nervous irritation and difficulty of breathing, became very great; so that it was necessary for several persons to be constantly employed in brushing and fanning him. He begged us to pray, that he might have more patience, but observed,—'It is good to suffer. It gives me some faint idea of what my Savior bore for me. Thanks, eternal thanks to that Grace, which snatched me from the jaws of the devourer! When I get home, how will I sing the praises of Him, who will have washed away all my sins! Crown him, yes, I'll crown him 'Lord of all.' That hymn, which begins, 'All hail the power of Jesus' name,' was ever a favorite one, and he often requested his brethren and sisters to sing it to him.

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As his life was protracted from day to day, and from week to week, far beyond the expectations of all he had full opportunities of conversing with his brethren and sisters on a variety of important and interesting subjects. He was repeatedly visited by other missionaries in the district, and by several friends from Jaffnapatam. With them he freely conversed on the subject of their soon following him to the eternal world. They also are witnesses of the displays of the loving kindness of the Lord to his suffering dying servant.

During the last weeks of his life, he was most of the time in a suffering state. His patience was therefore put to a severe test, by the slow approach of death, which to him instead of being the

"king of terrors" was a most welcome mes-
senger.

"On the morning of August 2d, Mrs. Richards rose early to relieve the brother, who had watched with him, and found him very quiet and comfortable, having rested better than usual. He spoke much of the goodness of God to him, and expressed a hope, that he should not repine when called to suffering. A season of severe coughing, soon came on, which affected him very much. Soon after this, he lost his appetite, and his cough rendered him unable to take stimulants, so that his strength failed fast. The fainting, and the distress for breath, accompanied with great nervous irritation, seemed too much for his feeble body to sustain, and he cried out, "O Lord deliver. O Lord Jesus come quickly. If this be dying, I must say, the pains, the groans, the dying strife. Lord, is it not enough?' In the evening of the same day, when Mrs. Richards went to take leave of him, she asked, as was her custom, whether she could do any thing more for his comfort before she retired. 'Yes,' he answered, 'commend me to God and to the word of His grace, who is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.' This was said with a trembling voice, and with many pauses. A little before 11 o'clock, she returned to him, and he asked why she came so soon? She told him, that she found it difficult to sleep while he was so distressed. He replied, 'I am more quiet and do not need you now; yet I feel great pain in my breast. I have a new feeling there.' She told him, she thought his symptoms indicated a speedy termination of his sufferings; and perhaps that was the last night. 'Well, my dear,' said he, 'you will unite with me in thanking God for so pleasant a prospect. Retire to rest and gain strength for the trial.' About three o'clock on the morning of the 3rd, he sent for his wife, and when she came, she found him in great bodily distress. Soon after this, in a season of fainting, he said, 'Now I shall go.' At half past four o'clock, Dr. Scudder was sent for. About five, he was again in great distress, when it was thought he was dying. Reviving a little, he said, 'This is hard work.' Immediately after this, his teeth began to chatter, his pulse became indistinct, and his breathing very irregular. A little before seven, Dr. Scudder arrived, and approaching his bed, said, "Well, brother Richards, it is almost over.' Joy beamed in his countenance as he looked up and said, 'Yes, brother Scudder, I think so—I hope so. O Lord Jesus, come quickly!' After drowsing a few moments, he took an affectionate leave of his afflicted wife, and observed, 'I have long been giving you my dying counsel and advice, and have now only to say *farewell!* The Lord bless you.' Shortly after, Dr. Scud-

Having stated the principal facts relative to the life and death of mr Richards, it appears desirable to add a few remarks obviously suggested by the narrative here given. In the character of the deceased there is much that is in a high degree worthy to be admired and imitated.

der observed that he might possibly continue a day or two longer. Mr. Richards, with a look of disappointment, replied, 'No, brother Scudder, no; I am just going.' Soon after, 'I have now clearer views of the Savior than before. O, He is precious.' About half past ten o'clock, he revived a little, and was able to speak more distinctly. On being asked, what were his views of divine things, he replied: 'Not so clear; I still feel that I see through a glass darkly. But soon, yes, *very soon*, face to face.' He then inquired for *James*, his only child, who was standing at the head of his bed. Taking him by the hand, he said, 'My son, your papa is dying. He will very soon be dead. Thou, my son, remember three things. Be a good boy; obey your mama; and love Jesus Christ. Now remember these, my son.' He, also, gave him a small pocket Testament, and told him to read it much and obey it. His whole appearance was such as to denote, that his last moments had arrived. Dr. Scudder had, for a few moments, left the room. Looking round upon those present, he said, 'Tell brother Scudder, *going*,'—and spoke no more. He continued to breathe, for a few minutes, and then quietly fell asleep. His brethren and sisters present united in singing a hymn, and in offering up a prayer to God, expressive of the mingled emotions of joy and grief excited by the occasion.

"On the following day, which was the Sabbath, the members of the mission assembled at Tillipally, and after attending to some appropriate religious exercises, committed the remains of their departed brother to the grave, in assured hope of a glorious resurrection, when *this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.*"

The Piety of Mr. Richards.

"Having been called into the kingdom of grace in early life," says his biographer, "his piety was of many years' growth. But its depth and maturity were marked no less by the diligence, with which he had cultivated it, than by the number of years he had maintained a pious character. The reality and strength of his piety, as will appear from the facts already stated, were put to a severe test through almost the whole period of his missionary course. His trials were many, and in some respects peculiar. But the manner in which he bore them, in the various situations, in which he was placed, evinced, that being tried he was not found wanting; but was enabled to give an illustration of the truth, that 'tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.' He was very particular in the observance of *stated secret prayer*. For many years before his death, it was his constant habit to attend to this duty morning, noon, and night; and, for several months before his death, he added another season immediately after coming in from his evening ride. He said, that as he could not perform much *active* labor in the mission, he felt it his duty to be much in prayer for its prosperity. In addition to these stated seasons of secret prayer, he united in family prayer morning and evening; in the season of prayer at one o'clock in the afternoon, which is observed by all the missionaries in the district; and, also, with his wife, after they had retired in the evening; making in all eight seasons of prayer every day. When he had been prevented, one morning, by company, from attending to his secret devotions; he wrote in his journal as follows: 'I felt a great uneasiness on this account, all the morning; and when I retired at noon, I felt as though I had been absent for a long time from an important place.' At another time, he thus expresses his feelings in the performance of this duty;—'I find it my delight, from day to day, to pour out my heart in prayer. O let me live in the remotest corner of the earth, and enjoy the sweets of communion with God, rather than in a palace, and remain a stranger to this happiness.' And again: 'This morning I have been favored with near access to the throne of grace. O how delightful!

> My willing soul would stay
> In such a frame as this.

What a great blessing to be allowed to spread all my wants before the living God; and to do this in the name of the Lord Jesus!' The following extract is expressive of his confidence in God. 'I have had no great joys, or extraordinary views, of late; but I feel such a confidence in God, as I would not part with for all the riches of the world. The Lord is faithful in fulfilling all his promises, and the language of my heart is, I will trust in him all the days of my life.' Those who knew him most intimately, can testify, that his life was in accordance with the extracts, that have been made from his writings; and that they were not mere words without meaning, but the real sentiments and feelings of his heart. It is not intended by this, however, that he was *perfect*,—that he was destitute of those faults and infirmities, that are incident to the best of men in this state of trial. He was fully aware of his easily besetting sins, and maintained a constant and vigorous warfare against them. It was his daily grief, that he was not more holy, and his constant endeavor to become perfectly conformed to his divine Lord and Master.

'Forgetting the things that are behind, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' From what has been said, it will appear, that he possessed that primary and essential qualification of a true missionary—ardent piety.

His partiality for the Missionary Work.

"Those, who knew him best, and saw him among the heathen, can testify, that he had a strong partiality for the missionary work. He was ever disposed to *magnify his office*. He visited many missionary stations, both in Asia and Africa, where he had frequent opportunities of surveying the missionary field in different aspects; but after all he had seen, that was unfavorable and discouraging, and the contrary, he was heard repeatedly to say, with much deliberation, 'I consider the employment of a humble and faithful missionary, who is engaged in actually *preaching the Gospel among the heathen*, the most noble, the most important, and the most desirable employment on earth.' The bitterest ingredient in his cup of affliction was, that he could not be thus employed. On the last topic, he wrote a few months before he died as follows: 'To be able to do little or nothing in a field so ripe for the harvest; to see hundreds ignorant of the day of salvation and yet unable to speak to them; to spend month after month, and year after year, in taking care of myself, instead of preaching to the heathen; has caused many a sigh and many a groan. But I hope I have been enabled to feel, that my labors are of little consequence; and that all the glorious predictions concerning the triumphs of the cross, will assuredly be accomplished, whether I live long, or die soon.

"In a letter to his brother, written about six months before his death, he gives a detailed account of his *joys* and *sorrows*, as a missionary. A few extracts from that letter will give a further illustration of his views and feelings on missionary subjects. One cause of sorrow, on which he dwelt very much, was the embarrassments of the mission at that time, for want of funds. At the conclusion of that subject he says, 'Could the friends of missions in America see the things which I see, and hear the things which I hear, they would not withhold their contributions from the treasury of the Lord. Could they see as I do, the hearts of my brethren and sisters united in prayer and in labor, *as the heart of one man;* could they behold these wretched heathen from day to day, carrying on their breasts and on their foreheads the badges of heathenism, and know the cruel bondage, in which they are held; there would, I think, be no more need of missionary sermons and missionary agents to unlock the coffers of the rich. The country would be all in motion. Some would give their thousands, and multitudes their dollars and cents, till the treasury of the Lord should be filled. If the object could not be effected in any other way, some would live on bread and water, and others would sell their houses and lands, to furnish the means of enlightening the heathen,—of making known to them the only Redeemer of sinners.'

"Among the sources of his joy, which he mentions, the following are selected.

From many accounts which you have seen you would be led to suppose that in the district of Jaffna many captives had been delivered from the galling chains of Salan. Would to God it were so! But though the devil might have been a little alarmed for the safety of his dominions here when the Crucifix was first waved over these sandy plains; though his fears might have been increased when this was exchanged for the reformed religion, with what feelings of triumph did he behold every church in the District except one, entirely forsaken; and the people who had been baptized in the name of Jesus, returning with one consent to their cruel rites and degrading superstitions! Imagine if you can, what were my feelings when I arrived in Jaffna and

found that this field which was once partially cultivated, was grown over with briers and thorns? Now, my brother, when things were in this state; when the people were mad upon their idols, to see the standard of the Redeemer erected in these dark and desolate regions filled my heart with unspeakable joy. Within a circumference of twenty miles we have five missionary stations in as many different parishes."

'I rejoice, especially, in seeing the word of God *preached* extensively to the people in their own tongue, because it pleases God *by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Soon I hope we shall be able to say,

> The year of jubilee is come,
> Return ye ransom'd sinners home.

" 'I come, now, to mention the unspeakable joy of seeing converts from among the heathen. When I think of what God has done for us in this way; when I think that God has increased our number since we came to this place; when I think of Malleappa, of Gabriel, of Nicholas, and of Philip; when I think of Porter, of Jordan, of Niles, of Onesimus, of George, and of Santeo, names enrolled with ours, and I hope with patriarchs and prophets; and when I think, also, of three or four others, who expect soon to become members of our church, my soul almost leaps from the body, and I pant for other powers, that I may be enabled to declare the feelings I possess.

" '*The promises of God* produce more joy in the breast of the missionary, than all other facts and considerations combined. If this source of joy were dried up, all others would soon fail. It would be of little consequence to me, that I have a few intimate and agreeable friends; that I see missionary stations formed, schools established, and the Gospel preached to thousands; that I see many prejudices overcome, and many good impressions made; that I see my brethren and sisters much engaged in labor and in prayer; that I see a few, who were once heathen, giving up all for Christ. Circumstances like these are exceedingly pleasant, but, without the promises of God, can never support the missionary. These promises can never fail us. Hopeful conversions may all prove to be false. The most loving missionaries may fall out by the way. The ear that has listened to the sound of the Gospel, may become deaf as an adder. These stations, that are now flourishing, may again be forsaken and tumble into ruins.

But the promises of God will all be accomplished; and the blessed Redeemer will have *the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, &c. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least unto the greatest.*' "

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He entertained correct views of the duties of missionaries.

He placed the standard of the missionary character high; and was much in the habit of contemplating in the glass of divine truth the awful responsibilities under which the missionary acts. He felt that the immortal interests of those to whom he can have acces are committed to his care; and that for every failure in duty, he must render a solemn account in the way of Judgment. He considered it the appropriate and most important duty of a missionary to preach the gospel. He thought that there is much in the nature of the employment, much in the manner of the adversary's assault, and much in the breast of the most eminent missionary, which will con-

spire to divert him from his main business, and to induce him to substitute some other employment for the preaching of the gospel.

He manifested a firmness of purpose and a spirit of perseverance which are of essential importance to the missionary.

His disposition to persevere in the pursuit of an object, though impeded by many obstacles, was much strengthened by the views he entertained of the manner in which God accomplishes his designs through the instrumentality of men. This idea cannot probably be better expressed than by mentioning an illustration which he frequently brought into view. He thought that for some high and holy purpose,

the Lord was pleased to withhold for the present, his special blessing from the American mission at Bombay; that if the missionaries there should through unbelief relax their exertions and desert the cause; or if the christian public in America should through want of faith and patience fail to give them that support and encouragement which their circumstances most urgently demand, it would then manifestly appear they had forfeited the blessing with which they hoped their labors would ultimately be crowned. His practical deduction from this was, the delay of the blessing and the various trials that have attended that mission, were powerful motives both to the missionaries and to the christian public in America

to redouble their exertions, and to persevere with stronger faith and more fervent prayer. It was his belief that the blessing is often great in proportion to the time of its being delayed. His firmness and steadfastness arising from such views of divine providence are worthy of imitation.

His Assistance to the Mission.

"It would not be correct to say, that in preaching the Gospel, or in attending to other active duties of the mission, he was extensively useful; though, from the facts mentioned in the narrative, it will appear that he did something. But,

Who does whate'er his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly, angels could no more.

In speaking of him with reference to this sentiment, it is proper to say, he was a laborious missionary, and acquitted himself well. But this is not all. His patience in suffering; his faith and confidence in God, amidst trials of various descriptions; his habitual cheerfulness and resignation to the divine will, while under the rod of affliction; his disposition to exert himself in the work of the mission, though unnerved by sickness; the lively interest he manifested in every thing that related to the cause of Christ; his desire to lay down his life in the sight of the heathen, as a testimony of love to their souls, and of his love to his Savior;—these, and other graces of a kindred nature, which he exhibited; reflect honor, not only upon himself as a missionary, but upon the cause to which he was devoted.

"In speaking of the assistance, rendered by him to the mission, with which he was connected, it must be remarked, that he was highly useful as a friend and counsellor; as a companion and fellow-laborer. Viewing him as sustaining these relations, his brethren are made deeply to feel their loss, and are reminded of the advantages they derived from his assistance. He was under very favorable circumstances for giving counsel and advice, both to individuals, and to the missionaries as a body. Consequently, he was very useful in promoting that spirit of union and brotherly love, which has hitherto subsisted among them, and which is justly considered one of the most pleasing features of their mission. The example of this dear brother, is a rich legacy, which his surviving fellow-laborers will highly value."

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In the dealings of God towards him there is much to increase the faith of every missionary and to excite him to diligence and fidelity in his master's service.

The Lord was pleased to afflict, but did not forsake him. He blasted his fondest expectations with regard to the privilege of laboring among the heathen, yet honored him as an instrument of advancing the missionary cause. He led him through the fire and through the water; but it was to make him know and feel the truth and excellency of his exceding great and precious promises. He sorely chastised him, but it was that he might become a partaker of his holiness and be in a great degree conformed to his master who was made perfect through suffering. The numerous particulars which might be

valid in proof of these remarks will long be remembered for the encouragement and consolation of his brethren and sisters in the mission.

But it is when he is contemplated as a christian more particularly as a christian going forth to meet the last grand enemy that the brightest views of his character and of the special grace of God towards him are most clearly seen. Much of what has been said might be adduced as evidence that he was a true disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus; that he imbibed his spirit, imitated his example and loved his service. Humility and patience were characteristic of his piety. A bright exhibition of these adorned the cause of Christ through his long and tedious illness. It is surely no

small proof that his faith was genuine and his hope well founded, that he contemplated the approach of death and his entrance into eternity habitually with composure and frequently with delight. It was noticeable through the whole course of his sickness that whenever there were strong indications that the hour of his release was at hand (and this was many times the case) he was unusually favored with pleasing anticipations of the heavenly rest. For a period of nearly five weeks he was suspended over the grave. During this time he was enabled frequently to rise upon the wings of faith to the abodes of the righteous, and his soul struggled to be set at liberty. But that patience might have her perfect work, and the whole good pleasure of God concerning him

be accomplished he was long detained a prisoner in his clayey tabernacle. While he was thus held between two worlds, his brethren had full opportunity of contemplating under circumstances of peculiar interest the nature of that change through which the christian passes in his exit from this world and his entrance on his heavenly inheritance. The distance between the two branches of the whole family in heaven and earth was contracted to a point, and the relation of time to eternity appeared in full view before them. There it was that they had some new and impressive views of the blessedness of that religion which they have come to make known to the heathen. They saw a new proof of the reality and excellence of the christian hope and of the

covenant faithfulness and mercy of God towards his people. They saw the worthlessness and vanity of everything here that has not a favorable bearing upon a dying hour. As oft therefore, as they review the scenes which they have witnessed, they seem to hear a voice saying "be ye stead fast immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

N. B.

For further notices of the Rev. James Richards, see Missionary Herald, August, 1824, pp. 233–236.